To the Youth [1952]

Bolesław Bierut

Translation By

‘A Nationalist Proletarian’ project

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Translators' notes:

Bolesław Bierut was the former communist activist and leader of People's Republic of Poland between the years 1947–1956.

This work is a reprint of a speech that Bierut gave on the 22nd of July 1952 to the young builder Leaders [Shock Workers] on the occasion of the 'National Day of the Rebirth of Poland'.

There are no foreign names in this work unlike the previous two ('Against Gomulkovschism' and 'To the Peasant and Agricultural Workers') works of Bierut that we translated. There is a peculiarity, and that is what Bierut often refers to, are the 'Leaders of work and science' or 'Przodownicy Pracy i nauki'. This refers to the Polish equivalent of the soviet udarniks (Rus: уда́рник) otherwise known as shock-workers in English.
In the translation we decided to put any reference to them in square brackets, like this: [Shock Workers/Culture] while keeping also a more general translation, this is because whenever Bierut refers to the shock workers, he is also more broadly referring to the 'leaders of work', the diligent workers overall, but it would be a mistake for the reader to consider this a broad speech as it references the struggles and the role models that these shock workers are for the entire working class.

Another peculiarity is 'The red brass - 'spiżowy' translation. 'Spiż' is a copper alloy with tin, zinc and lead; there's no straight forward translation of that into English, the closest possible translation would be 'gunmetal', 'red brass' and so we used the latter translation. Bierut picked this word to refer to the metal as it was and still used in industry as opposed to making allusions to more 'noble' metals such as gold or silver.

We tried to keep the text as close to the style of Bierut as possible. Furthermore, we made great effort in trying to balance faithfulness to the original with textual clarity. Therefore, possible odd way of phrasing certain sentences is an expected result of that.

If you have any critique as to the quality of this translation or would like to contact/join us then you can contact us on Twitter, the link is in the footer.

Speech delivered at the Rally of young builder Leaders [Shock Workers] of People's Poland on the National Day of the Rebirth of Poland — 22 July 1952

Citizens! Polish youth! The leaders of work and science [Shock workers]! Participants in the rally in the capital!

Poles from all towns and villages!

I welcome you and greet you wholeheartedly on our National Day!

(Applause).

Eight years ago, the brotherly Soviet armies entered the Polish lands, liberating them from the tyranny of the Hitlerite invaders. Thanks to this, our country regained its complete freedom! The Polish nation celebrates this day of its liberation, sending warm feelings of gratitude and friendship to the Soviet people and their Great Leader — Joseph Stalin.

(Stirred ovation and prolonged applause in Stalin's honour)

Joyful and happy is today's day for all those who love our Fatherland. A new victorious and glorious page has been written into the great book of Polish history — the Constitution of the People's Republic of Poland.

(Applause)

The hard and long struggle of our fathers was not in vain, nor was the blood and toil of those who gave their lives for the freedom and victory of the Polish people. The work and efforts of the entire present generation of leaders [Shock Workers] and builders of People's Poland are yielding and will yield more and more abundant fruit.

Young friends!

Your beautiful rally in the nation's capital on these memorable days is not just a simple joyous celebration — it has a deeper meaning. Your rally is an appeal of young patriots to the whole nation. In a moment the Polish youth, through your voices, you will make an oath to our Fatherland, which will become an expression of the most ardent feelings of every patriot — regardless of age. With the deepest affection today, together with you, the entire Poland will repeat the most solemn pledge that a nation can make to its Fatherland through the hearts of its youth.

We are building Poland, we are building socialism as a better and more just social system. Never before in the history of Poland has there been such a lofty cause, such a great task. It denotes not only a new epoch in the internal life of the whole nation, but also a momentous breakthrough in the life of each individual, in work, in thoughts and feelings of each of us. The victory of socialism is an epoch of rebirth in the history of all humanity. To get to know, to understand, and to devote our lives to this great cause-this is our goal, this is the noblest and most beautiful task of today's generation.

How do we come to know, understand, and remodel our personal lives to become capable and prepared for this lofty task by which future human generations will judge our deeds?

We should diligently and thoroughly learn about the laws of social development, about the life of past generations. It is a question of learning the simple truth about how the division of society into classes of: masters and slaves, nobles and peasants, capitalists and workers, in a word, exploiters and the exploited, the oppressed and their tyrants, weighs on social life and distorts it. The task of our generation is to abolish once and for all the division of people into classes, and there is only one way to do this: to develop the socialized economy ever higher and to build socialism.

(Applause)

We owe it to ourselves to develop our leadership at work [Shock Culture] and to constantly improve our qualifications, in order to contribute in this way to the economic prosperity of Poland.

The red brass [‘spiżowy’ — see Translator’s notes], indestructible foundation of socialism is our Six-Year Plan, the plan of industrialization and economic restructuring. It is a plan which will place the national economy at the level of modern requirements, secure the defensive power of the country, lay the basis for an ever more rapid and complete fulfilment of the material and cultural needs of society.

Consequently, in order to help build socialism, let us stand in as many numbers as possible in the first ranks of the National Front in the struggle for peace, in the struggle for the Six-Year Plan.

(Applause)

For thousands of years, the exploiters have done everything to fetter the thoughts and worldview of the working people with superstition. Keeping the working masses in the dark has always been the method of protecting the system of exploitation and exploiters' rule.

The great and noblest task of our generation is to fight for science and knowledge to have the freest and widest possible access to the minds of all people, for truth to triumph over falsehood, for human thought to develop creatively without any hindrance, so that as we are liberating the working people from exploitation, we help them free themselves from the immemorial slavery to superstition and ignorance. On the basis of the rights enshrined in our Constitution, let us therefore become fighters for truth and knowledge, for culture and human progress. In this way we will hasten the victory of socialism.

The capitalist system is no longer able to contain the decay and crisis that is tearing it apart and severing it from within. But the imperialist exploiters nevertheless want to impose their rule on the world by force of arms. For two years past they have been trying unsuccessfully to destroy the Korean people by the most criminal means of mass genocide. But the criminal imperialist plans will only be defeated if they are vigorously opposed by all people who want peace, and such people are the vast majority in the world.

(Applause)

It is the task of our generation to defend peace against the plots of the igniters of the world, to foster cooperation and strengthen friendship among nations freed from the shackles of capitalism. By defending peace, we defend the independence of our own country and fulfil our duty to all humanity.

Young friends!

Here are the four most important issues, the most important tasks that face us, our entire generation today — the struggle for knowledge, for the most efficient work, for truth, for peace. (Applause. Those gathered shout in praise of peace). It is at the same time a struggle for the growth of the strength of our country, a struggle for the unity of the nation and its flourishing, a struggle for the independence and prosperity of the country.

How to prepare ourselves, how to arm ourselves for this fight?

The best and reliable weapon in this fight is to nurture in our hearts and minds the most beautiful feelings of patriotism and self-sacrifice, a great desire to learn the truth, to educate the mind, devotion and dedication to the cause of the working people, loyalty to the nation and the Fatherland, exemplified by the great patriots and fighters: Tadeusz Kościuszko, Adam Mickiewicz, Jarosław Dąbrowski, Ludwik Waryński, Feliks Dzierżyński, Marceli Nowotko, Karol Świerczewski and many, many other heroes leading the nation. Our task is to educate and forge ourselves as well as the most numerous ranks of Polish youth in accordance to these best role models. Let us teach them and inspire them to eradicate the remnants of evil and ugliness in our lives, the gloomy relics of the old bourgeois system, its moral decay, its savagery.

Young friends!

The leaders of work and science [Shock Workers] are those who love their country most strongly, they are those whom our Constitution urges to be embraced by the widespread reverence of the people. What more beautiful, more distinguished recognition can there be than that which the highest laws of the nation accord to the leaders of work [Shock Workers].

(Applause)

People's Poland broke down privileges for the rich and opened wide the gates to education, work and social advancement for the youth. The Constitution of the People's Republic of Poland enacted today is an embodiment of the aspirations of successive generations; it is a guarantee of the thing dearest to the heart of every Pole — a free and independent Fatherland, that is flourishing and just.

(Thunderous applause)

Young attendees of the Rally!

You are those who have distinguished yourselves with sacrifice, dedication and devotion to your country. You are leaders in work and science [Shock Workers]. You have been able to translate your commitments into creative deeds and for that, on behalf of the state, I offer you my sincere gratitude and appreciation.

(Thunderous applause and a warm ovation in honour of Bierut)

I have no doubt that with your fervent sentiments you will be able to ignite the hearts of millions of Polish youth who, together with you and the whole nation, will be the creators and implementers of further achievements in socialist construction, working on further reinforcing the strength and power of our beloved Fatherland. On us, on our generation, and on you, on the emerging generation of People's Poland, rests the responsibility for further implementation of these great ideas, which are contained in our Constitution.

So let us all vow today with faithfulness to the Constitution of the People's Republic of Poland, a Republic that fights every day for the victory of the cause of peace between nations, for the sacred cause of the flourishing of our nation and all free nations, for the happiness of all working people, all people of good will.

(Applause)

Our brave youth, self-sacrificing and boundlessly devoted to their People's Fatherland — Long live!

(Loud, prolonged applause)

Solidarity and brotherhood of the victorious camp of peace and socialism — long live!

(Stormy applause)

Our beloved Fatherland — the People's Republic of Poland — long live!

(Thunderous applause, changing into ovation)

“Trybuna Ludu”

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